DOCUMENT RESUME

RC 010 040

ED 144 726

AUTHOR Knowlton, Clark S.
TITLE Implications of Change in Mexican American Families.
PUB DATE 29 Apr 76
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Western Social Science Association Annual Meeting (Tempe, Arizona, April 29-May 1, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; *Cultural Background; *Extended Family; *Family (Sociological Unit); Family Role; Group Unity; Land Settlement; Mexican American History; *Mexican Americans; *Social Change; *Social History; Sociocultural Patterns; Subculture
IDENTIFIERS *United States (Southwest)

ABSTRACT

The Mexican American bilateral extended family system was a part of the cultural heritage from Mexico or Spain and a family system developed as a social and cultural response to the cultural isolation and frontier environment of the Borderlands. As a social system, it mobilized members to work the land, protect family members and property against Indian raids, provide settlers for new settlements, carry out religious ceremonies and rituals, socialize the children, care for the aged, the sick, and the orphans, settle disputes, and provide leadership for the social group. Under the impact of either urban or rural poverty, the system collapsed, or at least suffered serious modifications. Where it did survive, it gave its members enhanced survival capabilities and strengthened their competitive situation. It also facilitated urbanization and industrialization. Among the middle and landowning classes, it facilitated the transfer of capital and personnel from agriculture into business and professional investments. It provided a base of political strength that enabled Mexican Americans to play political roles, except where the forces of discrimination were too strong or where Anglo American immigration swamped the Mexican Americans. Although the forces of urbanization and acculturation have weakened it severely, it still survives along with other family systems among the Mexican Americans. Indeed, it shows a hardy ability to survive, to adjust, and to persist. Even where it has almost vanished, its values still pervade Mexican American family systems. (Author/NQ)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED144726

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

JUL 1976
ERIC/CRESS
RECEIVED

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN MEXICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES

by

Clark S. Knowlton

University of Utah

Paper prepared for the Western Social Science Association
Annual Meeting

April 29-May 1, 1976
Arizona State University
Tempe, Arizona

SC 010 040

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Mark S. Knowlton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

Introduction..... In this paper, I would like to present some rather tentative hypotheses about the changing Mexican-American family systems. My comments will be prefaced first by some general observations on Mexican-American history that are essential for understanding the complex family systems among the Mexican Americans followed by the presentation of a few hypotheses.

The Mexican Americans are among the more heterogeneous and reapidly growing minorities in the United States. Many subgroupings exist among them. These subgroupings, although sharing fundamental cultural values, do differ from each other in racial composition, length of residence in the United States, geographical distribution, religious affiliation, historical experiences in this country, degree of segregation and discrimination, rural-urban residence, social class differentiation, degree of cultural isolation from both Mexican and Anglo-American society and culture, economic characteristics, integration into Anglo-American society, and amount of acculturation and assimilation.

At the coming of the Anglo-American into the Southwest, three major Mexican-American subgroupings existed that had but sporadic contact with each other. As a result, some cultural differences among them had come into existence. These three subdivisions are: (1) the Californios, resident in California, (2) the Tejanos found in central and southern Texas and sporadically in settlements along the Mexican border in West Texas, and (3) the Spanish Americans of New Mexico and Southern Colorado. Besides these three, a very small nucleus of Mexican Americans hung on around Tucson in spite of persistent Apache attacks. The Californios, overwhelmed by Anglo-American migration, had ceased by 1890 to play any significant role in the economic, political, and social life of California (Pitt, 1971). The Mexican-American inhabitants of Texas were also overwhelmed by Anglo-American conquest but although reduced to the position of unskilled and semi-skilled workers except in the lower Rio Grande and along

the Mexican-American border, the Mexican-American social structure managed to survive. Constantly reinforced by migration from Mexico, the Mexican Americans in Texas increased in number and filled the basic unskilled and semi-skilled labor needs of South and Central Texas and along the Mexican border (Meinig, 1969). In contrast to the Californios and Tejanos, the Spanish Americans in New Mexico managed to hold their own against the encroaching Anglo Americans. Even though they suffered chronic land loss, they have continued to produce important political, economic, and educational leaders in New Mexico (Knowlton, 1965).

New Mexico and Texas are major sources of migrants to other parts of the United States. New Mexicans have emigrated into all of the Rocky Mountain States where they often compose the majority of the Mexican-American population, into Arizona and West Texas, into the Northwest, and also into the states of the Great Plains and the Midwest. The Tejanos, on the other hand, have sent large numbers of migrants into the Midwest, to California and the Pacific Coast, and now into the South. Unfortunately, little research exists on the basic structure of the Spanish-American and Tejano family systems during the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. It is still not too late to reconstruct these family systems.

Furthermore, one wave after another of Mexican immigrants from diverse sections of Mexico have continued to migrate to the United States from the turn of the century up to the present time. This migration continues to bring into this country large numbers of legal and illegal migrants. Each generation of Mexican migrants differs from prior generations in amount of education, knowledge of English, familiarization with technology and urban life, and cultural values. The majority of these migrants are single young men, although many

family units and women have come in. These immigrants, except in Northern New Mexico, have intermingled extensively with local Mexican Americans. Therefore, one can find in many major metropolitan centers west of the Mississippi River, first, second, third and even fourth generation Mexican-American and Mexican neighborhoods. The inhabitants of these neighborhoods differ from each other in cultural, social, and economic characteristics and in degree of acculturation. The result of all of this is that one must realize that there are many diverse Mexican-American family systems, not just one as is so commonly assumed in the literature.

Unfortunately, the complexity of the Mexican-American family systems have not been fully reflected in the literature. The reason for this is quite simple. Very few social scientists were interested in the Mexican Americans. What sporadic field studies were done focused upon specific aspects of the life and social systems of selected subgroupings in time and space. Although providing a base line for some groups against which social change can be measured, the majority of these field studies by now are quite dated and are no longer descriptive. Because of the lack of adequate field studies, those in existence have been quoted, requoted, and published and republished in the literature. Scholars interested in the Mexican Americans tend to over-generalize from the few studies in existence. Erroneous conclusions and hypotheses unsupported by field research therefore tend to creep into the literature.

Although Penalosa states that the study of the Mexican-American family system lacks a theoretical framework through which an analysis of the impact of social change upon the Mexican-American family system can be made (1968: 681), Miller, in a most interesting analysis of the literature of the Mexican-American family systems, argues that "while an explicit theoretical framework may not be presented, an inarticulated theoretical framework has come into existence."

He points out that current literature "is based on the twin concepts of acculturation and assimilation and an ideal-typical construct postulating on the one hand, the "traditional" Mexican family type, and on the other its presumed polar opposite, the modern middle-class American family type" (1975). Presumably, the Mexican-American family system is in the process of moving from a posited, extended, bilateral, patriarchal family system to the nuclear companionate family system of middle-class Anglo America. Miller argues that the implied ideological foundations of the acculturation-assimilation model is its major weakness. He believes that such a model presupposes that acculturation and assimilation into Anglo-American society are ideal goals that should be pursued by Mexican Americans. Any failure or slowness on their part to acculturate or assimilate can be placed upon them, their language, or their culture, and not upon external political, economic, or social factors (Miller, 1975).

This current model of social change in the Mexican-American family system, apart from its underlying values, is simplistic and rests upon unproven assumptions. Among these assumptions are the following: (1) A single traditional Mexican-American family system existed; (2) this family system was patriarchal, extended, and bilateral; (3) a single Anglo-American middle-class system exists; and (4) the Mexican-American family system is today gradually approximating the middle Anglo-American system. As has been argued, it seems likely that more than one traditional Mexican-American family system existed. It is equally probable that more than one family system may exist among middle-class Anglo Americans. Furthermore, the majority of Mexican Americans, except in New Mexico, before World War II have had little intimate contact with middle-class Anglo Americans. They have associated far more with working-class Anglo Americans, often ethnic in origin. One can assume, therefore, that they have been more exposed to the structure and values of family types of blue collar Anglo-American

workers than they have been to the family structure and values of middle-class Anglo Americans. This of course has changed since World War II. As more and more Mexican Americans have effected an entry into the broad, poorly defined, American middle class, they have become exposed to the broad spectrum of family types among both ethnic and Anglo-American groupings.

Traditional Mexican-American Family Systems..... It is argued here that more than one type of Mexican-American family has existed in the Southwest. The historic Mexican-American family systems were related to the family systems of northern Mexico as well as being formed by the different geographical and socio-economic environments of the three major Mexican-American subgroupings in the Southwest. Until efforts are made to reconstruct the historical Mexican-American family systems of the late 19th century, most discussion of the historical evolution and of social change among the Mexican Americans will be largely academic. A most fundamental need exists to secure data on the historic family systems of the Mexican Americans before they study of the Mexican-American family will rest upon a sound empirical basis.

The vast majority of the Mexican Americans at the time of the American conquest and occupation of the Southwest in the 1830's and 1840's earned their living from agriculture. The large hacienda or ranch was the predominant type of land tenure in California, Texas, and in southern and eastern New Mexico. What limited evidence we possess indicates that the family system of the hacendados or ranchers throughout the Southwest was the extended patriarchal bilateral family system. Castillo in commenting about the characteristics of the hacendado family in pre-conquest California reports:

> "The family in pre-conquest Los Angeles was paternalistic in its structure and moral atmosphere. In the Mexican tradition, newly married couples were under the strict supervision of their elder parents, especially the parents of the bride. Often in-laws retained the right to punish their married children...The newly

> married owed obedience to all elder family members regardless of their blood relationship... Strong attitudes regarding family solidarity, the subordination of women, and respect due to elders helped to create a family structure where almost half the population lived in extended family households"(1975:41-59).

In discussing the same population, Pitt adds the following:

> "In California, the most important type of family was that of the rancher. All lines of dependency radiated outward from his casa and embraced his children, his in-laws, other relatives, orphans, a bevy of Indian servants, sometimes also the residents of the nearest village" (1971:11).

Although few descriptions exist of the hacendado families in New Mexico and in Texas, the same type of extended family system undoubtedly existed. Each extended bilateral patriarchal hacendado family was connected with other hacendado families through fictive kinship or the godfather or compadrazgo system.

Another variant of the extended patriarchal bilateral family system was found among the rural Spanish-American village people of Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado. The social organization of these villages seemed to be composed of (1) the village community itself, (2) the patriarchal extended bilateral family, (3) the patron system, and (4) the Roman Catholic Church. Where these systems are still functioning, the village populations are still resistant to acculturation and to Anglo-American dominance. Where they have seriously weakened, acculturation has been accelerated. In these villages, the extended family was the most important social system. Until fairly recently, the extended Spanish-American rural village family system carried on the functions of education, socialization, social control, religion, social welfare, production, recreation, and consumption. As few people before the breakdown of the rural village economic systems left the villages permanently, the size of these families was large. Indeed, some entire villages such as Los Lunas, Los Montoyas, Los Garcias, and Los Torres were settled by members of single extended families (Knowlton, 1965).

These families were in the nature of powerful rural clans. In many sections of northern New Mexico, patrons as such did not exist, and family heads, the oldest living male, were often the political, military and economic leaders of the region. Blood feuds as such seldom existed. Extended families were related to other extended families in the same villages through fictive kinship. Although factionalism was common, and the villages at times were divided into two or more factions, such factionalism because of fictive kinship seldom led to bloodshed (Swadesh, 1974).

The extent to which the extended family system existed among the peons or sheepherders and cowboys trapped in debt peonage on the large ranches is not known. As the attention of most American observers was focused upon the more spectacular rancher and rural village families, few observations or studies were made of the family systems of the peons. Although some extended families may have existed among the peons on some ranches, it is doubtful that the family system was as extended and self-sufficient as that of the landowners. The authority of parents and grandparents over adolescent and young adult family members was circumscribed by the greater authority of the patron and landowner. One might suspect that the family structure of the rural workers was less authoritatian, more equalitarian, less patriarchal, and less extended than the family systems of the landowners.

Although the number of free, landless, rural and urban workers was small, some groupings did exist, especially in the states of California and Texas. To their ranks could be added Mexican soldiers, small merchants, school teachers, teamsters and artisans. Their family systems have also been ignored by scholars. The point that I want to make here is that the family systems of the Mexican Americans at the coming of the Anglo Americans were more complex and more differentiated than most students of the Mexican-American family systems seem to be aware.

Social Change in the Mexican-American Family Systems caused by American Occupation..... Although the economic systems of the Mexican Southwest has been fully integrated into the economic system of the United States long before the American conquest, the occupation of the region by the United States brought about accelarated economic, political, and social change into all aspects of the Mexican-American cultural and social systems, including the family. The Mexican Americans of California and Texas felt their impact far sooner than did the Spanish Americans of New Mexico. Castillo, in his study of social change in the Chicano family in the Los Angeles region from 1850 to 1880, found that the extended family system among the Mexican Americans of the Los Angeles region collapsed with the destruction of the landholding system of the Mexican-American ranchers. Once the majority of the Mexican-American ranchers had lost their land to Anglo Americans through force, fraud, and entrapment in an alien economic and legal system, the traditional extended family of the Mexican-American rancher was severely weakened. He goes on to point out that in 1844, less than one-fifth of all family heads in Los Angeles were women, and many of these were widows. By 1880, more than a third of the Chicano families had female heads. In less than forty years, according to Castillo, the number of families headed by women quadrupled. In most of these families, the women heads were dependent upon the labor of their children or other relatives. Very few seemed to have had employment themselves. Another indication of the collapse of the extended patriarchal family system was what Castillo calls a "dramatic increase in the number of common-law marriages from 1850 to 1880" (1975). Although accurate data is lacking, one can assume that land loss among the Mexican American landowners in other sections of the Southwest, such as Texas, also weakened the extended family system. As land loss occurred at a much slower rate in New Mexico than in either California or in Texas, and many

families losing their land were able to recoup family fortunes in business or in politics, the extended Spanish-American patriarchal bilateral family continued to function until very recently. Indeed, in a modified form, it still exists in certain segments of the Spanish-American middle-class and upper-class groupings.

Thus, the impact of the American occupation of the Southwest varied geographically by region and by social class. In California, the Mexican-American landowning class was dispossessed as it was in many sections of Texas. As Americans took over the large Mexican ranches in California, they employed Mexican-American vaqueros or cowboys and sheepherders, the only local resident labor force available. With the erosion of the cattle industry in the 1880's by drought and falling prices, more and more ranches shifted from livestock to grain or to agricultural specialties. The dispossessed Mexican-American workers migrated to nearby urban areas to compete unequally for employment with European immigrants and Anglo-American workers. Some of the landowners were able to preserve capital and they often established small businesses serving primarily the Spanish-speaking people (Pitt, 1971: 83-119).

In other parts of the Southwest, the coming of American troops and the establishment of military bases provided non-agricultural cash employment for the first time to substantial numbers of Mexican Americans. The creation of new markets for agricultural products stimulated production by both Mexican-American and Anglo-American farmers and ranchers. The Southwest moved from a somewhat stagnant economy to a capitalistic market economy within a few years. In order to provide manufactured goods to a population with growing amounts of cash in their possession, both Mexican-Americans and Anglo Americans opened a varied assortment of retail and wholesale establishments. The business of freighting goods from one part of the Southwest to another became a monopoly of Mexican-American freighting companies in many areas.

My own observations are that the extended Mexican-American family among many landowners and prosperous villagers served as a mechanism to mobilize capital and to transfer it from ranching and farming into business. Many Mexican-American landowners showed no hesitation about shifting from agriculture into business. Such businesses were staffed with relatives and trusted dependents. A reluctance existed to hire strangers and non-family members. These businesses provided business training for a new generation of Mexican-American entrepreneurs. Among this group, the extended bilateral patriarchal family facilitated the formation of a business and professional class through its ability to mobilize and to transfer both labor and capital. In turn, urban businessmen and professionals tended to recreate the family system familiar to them. A growing dependency of family members upon the more successful kinfolks for employment and financial assistance was a major change.

On the other hand, many Mexican-American landless workers began to move from their place of birth in search of employment. Inevitably, the bonds between kinfolks separated from each other, before the days of mass literacy and mass media, inevitably weakened. Even here, however, the extended family facilitated physical and social mobility. Individuals from one family who were successful frequently assisted brothers and sisters and even cousins and other relatives to find employment. Thus, one extended family might send out four or five members to different areas. The one who was most successful would serve as a point of entrance for his relatives into mining camps, the military bases, or urban centers recreating a smaller extended family.

Miners from Sonora began to migrate to California during the gold rush. Excluded from the mines by jealous Anglo-American miners, many returned to Sonora. Many retreated to nearby urban centers or found employment in freighting or farming. Others moved on to Arizona, uncovering new mineral

deposits (Pitt, 1971:48-68). As freelance placer mining was replaced by hard rock mining and the building of smelters that required large expenditures of capital, Anglo-American miners tended to move out of the mining camps. They were replaced by Mexican and Mexican-American immigrants. The Mexicans usually came from the mining and smelting communities of northern Mexico. These Mexican migrants tended to be young males or young couples moving away from the authority of their parents and relatives. Although the family system was patriarchal and familistic, it was not extended. But even here, the mechanism of the extended family played an important role in Mexican migration to the United States. Migrants frequently sent for relatives to join them, forming a smaller edition of the extended family system. The family units were smaller than those found in Mexico. The authority of parents, grandparents, and older members of the family was significantly weakened. Adult children did not remain always with their parents as they matured. The traditional roles of grandparents, parents, and older brothers and sisters was significantly weakened in the mining and smelting centers of the Southwest.

Mexican migration and Mexican-American physical mobility greatly expanded with the accelerated development of the American Southwest during the 1900's. Dams and canals were built. Large areas of land came under cultivation. Cities grew rapidly. Railroads ended the physical isolation of much of the Southwest during the 1900's. Most of the labor needs of the expanding economy was met by Mexican and Mexican-American workers.

Thousands of Mexican refugees crossed the ill-marked border into the United States in the 1900's seeking refuge from the violence and turmoil of the Mexican revolution. The revolution, the subsequent flight to safety in the United States, and the search for employment on the American side of the border damaged the extended family but did not destroy it. Although seldom if ever

did an entire extended family that might involve several hundred persons reach the United States as a family group, fragments of extended families composed of brothers, sisters, cousins, and perhaps uncles and aunts or grandparents did migrate together. As such families contained a number of workers, they usually managed to survive better and to establish themselves faster than did Mexican refugees who fled as individuals or as a nuclear family. Once conditions settled down in Mexico, contact with relatives was often re-established. The family in the United States quite frequently assisted relatives to join them. The point that I would like to make here is that even though the extended family was weakened by revolution, by flight, or by the need to find employment, it tended to re-establish itself under stabilized conditions. Parents all through this period, and indeed up to the present, would like their married children to settle close to them, and many did. However, the re-established extended families were not as extended and not as patriarchal as were the families in the rural villages and ranches in the American Southwest or in Northern Mexico.

The depression had severe repercussions upon the extended family system. In northern New Mexico, thousands of men who lost their jobs in agriculture and in industry outside of New Mexico returned with their wives and children to their native villages. They were accepted readily by relatives who shared what they had. The coming of the drought in the 1930's accelerated land loss to Anglo Americans through inability to pay the land tax, and spreading erosion destroyed the village economic systems. The village population was rescued from mass destitution and actual starvation by the federal government. A dependence was established that still exists.

From the 1900's on, thousands of Mexicans and Mexican Americans moved from the Southwest into the states of the Midwest and the Pacific Coast, not only

as migrant farm workers but as railroad and industrial workers. Often migrant farm work was but a step to industrial employment. The immigrants came not only as individuals but also as small clusters of relatives such as several married brothers or sisters migrating together with their families. One suspects that the Mexican Americans are more apt to migrate in family groups than many other ethnic or racial groups. This urban movement weakened the extended family but certainly did not destroy it. Virtually every family system could now be found in the Mexican-American barrios in the large metropolitan areas from surprisingly large extended families, through small clusters of relatives living close together, to abandoned women with children. Independent residence for the nuclear family units by now had become almost universal in the urban areas and even in rural communities. Again, the extended family served its traditional role in facilitating the migration of relatives.

World War II and its Aftermath..... During World War II, thousands of Mexican Americans from all parts of the United States intermingled with each other and with other Americans in military camps and on the field of battle. For large numbers, it was the first time that they had ventured far from their ethnic communities. Out of their own interaction in the military service, there developed a strong sense of ethnic identity. Out of their interaction with fellow Americans willing to accept them, and with Anglo-Americans outside the Southwest who expressed little prejudice toward the Mexican Americans, there grew a strong identity as American citizens and a desire to acculturate and to move into the main stream of American life. The veterans desired to learn English, to escape poverty, and to improve their occupational skills. In varied ways, they had discovered America. Quite a few of them married girls in diverse parts of the Southwest and never returned to their neighborhoods (Knowlton, 1975: 19-57).

Additional thousands of Mexican Americans and Mexicans receiving vocational training found employment in the defense plants from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. A new social stratum of the skilled and semi-skilled, Mexican-American, urbanized, industrialized, blue-collar workers came into existence. These people moved quite often in small family groups as well as individuals. The patriotism of the moment relaxed family controls enough to permit daughters and even a few wives to work in defense plants. Intermarriage with other ethnic groups increased. Young people secured greater control over their own lives. The patriarchal nature of the Mexican-American family weakened and in some cases vanished. The traditional Mexican-American family systems began to change under the impact of urbanization and industrialization. The important point to realize, however, is not only that the family system was changing and diversifying, but that many aspects of the traditional extended bilateral family survived. Parents still preferred their married children to reside close to them. Although ties with distant kin might weaken, brothers, sisters, and often cousins associated closely together and assisted each other. Grandparents were often left behind in the native communities, stranded with only a grandchild or two left with them. Even under urban conditions, the modified family systems of the blue-collar Mexican Americans did not approximate the presumed companionate nuclear family system of the middle-class Anglo American (Knowlton, 1975:19-57).

The provisions of the G.I. Bill had a profound impact upon the Mexican-American community. Quite a large number of Mexican-American veterans enrolled in universities and colleges. The majority of these students majored in law, business management, accounting, teaching, and social work. Deeply ambitious, motivated toward acculturation into Anglo-American society, they provided leadership in the successful legal struggles against segregated public facilities

in the Southwest during the 1950's, organized numerous clubs and civic organizations engaged in good works, and became quite interested in politics. Utilizing the housing provisions of the G.I. Bill, they acquired homes in Anglo-American neighborhoods. Many married Anglo-American girls. Associating the Spanish language and Mexican-American culture and social systems with poverty, cultural isolation, and backwardness, large numbers would not let their children learn Spanish. They tried to establish nuclear, middle-class, Anglo-American type families. They often let their relationships with poorer, less acculturated relatives wither. They were also behind the drive in the 1950's to encourage schools to abandon whatever fragments of bilingual education still existed and to punish children for speaking Spanish. Spanish language publications died and interest in Mexican-American culture and in Mexico and Latin America ceased to exist (Knowlton,1975:19-57).

It is interesting to reflect on the political and social role that this group might have played if the United States had entered into a major recession or depression in the 1950's. As it was, they found full employment and moved up the socioeconomic ladder in the thriving times of the 1950's and 1960's. To them, America had kept its promises. Their family systems were extremely varied, ranging from families indistinguishable from those of their Anglo-American neighbors to family systems with many characteristics of the older extended-family systems.

Even larger numbers of Mexican-American veterans secured on-the-job training through the G.I. Bill. Many, upon graduation, opened small businesses and repair shops that competed quite well with Anglo-American businesses. Others found work in shops and factories. Among them, there was little incentive toward acculturation or toward the preservation of the Spanish language and Mexican-American culture. Those living in the Southwest tended to be

Spanish-speaking and to function in a modified Mexican-American cultural environment, always changing under the impact of mass media in the English language. Those residing outside the Southwest tended to lose the Spanish-American culture and to acculturate into the working-class Anglo-American cultural environment in which they found themselves.

The extended Mexican-American family system tended to die out as social and spatial mobility increased. Relatives ceased to live in the same household although parents were still more apt to be cared for by children than among Anglo Americans. Grandparents seldom migrated and often were left behind. Although aid was still apt to be given to relatives, the needs of the nuclear family unit came first. Contacts were often lost with relatives residing in other areas. But even here, the values of the traditional extended bilateral patriarchal family continued to exist, although modified by the urban environment. Families tended to be more patriarchal than the Anglo families though less authoritarian than before. Children were still under greater control. Divorce and family breakdown, although increasing, were less than among the Anglo Americans. Women were still under greater constraints although gaining the ability to work outside the home. The bonds of kinship still were acknowledged, and relatives helped each other if they were able.

Even though the rate of social mobility was quite high among Mexican Americans during the 1950's and 1960's, large numbers were unable to escape from the ranks of farm labor, constantly reinforced also by legal and illegal migration from Mexico. Many studies seem to indicate that the extended family does not exist among farm migrants. Much of course, depends upon the definition of the extended family. While it is true that farm migrant families seldom have enough funds to provide financial assistance to relatives, and often may not live closely together, yet groups of relatives still travel together

in the migrant stream. These may be several married sisters and their families or brothers and their families. Often parents or grandparents are brought along to care for the younger children. At times, families may leave children with grandparents or with uncles or aunts so they can remain in school rather than drop out of school to travel with their parents. My own observations lead me to believe that while the traditional large extended family once common in several forms no longer exists, new family systems with extended characteristics still exist among the migrants.

It is not sufficient to study the migrants during the migratory cycle or during their period of residence in their home base. One should analyze the family system during the entire year with attention paid to all the relatives with whom a migrant family might interact during the phase of migration and the phase of stable residence.

Increasing numbers of migrant families are dropping out of the migrant stream. They tend to settle down as nuclear family units or as groups of two or three brothers or sisters with their families. Once they become established, they may help other relatives to settle out of the stream. However, the extended family system in its traditional form certainly does not exist among the migrants to any great degree but some of its characteristics and values do survive.

An interesting recent development among many Mexican-American college students is a tendency to devalue Anglo-American culture and social systems. The desire to acculturate and to assimilate has seriously weakened. Many students have become quite interested in Mexican-American history, culture, and social systems. They no longer view their society and culture with feelings of inferiority or shame. Well aware of the social problems besetting the Anglo-American family systems, they have acquired a new respect for their own family systems. It remains to be seen what kinds of families they in turn will establish.

Summary..... The Mexican-American bilateral extended family system was not only part of the cultural heritage from Mexico or Spain but it was also a family system that developed as a social and cultural response to the cultural isolation and frontier environment of the Borderlands where each family group, ranch or village was thrown upon its own resources. The extended family, in view of the weaknesses of other social systems, had to discharge a variety of social functions maintained by a variety of social agencies in our own society. As a social system, it had to mobilize members to work the land, care for the livestock, protect family members and property against Indian raids, provide settlers for new settlements and ranches, carry out religious ceremonies and rituals, socialize the children, care for the aged, the sick, the widows, and the orphans, and to settle disputes and provide leadership for the social group. Disputes between extended families seldom degenerated into blood feuds because of the bonds of fictive kinship.

Under the impact of either urban or rural poverty, the extended family system collapsed, or at least suffered serious modifications. But even here, where it did survive, it gave its members enhanced survival capabilities and strengthened their competitive situation. It also facilitated urbanization and industrialization. Among the middle and the landowning classes it facilitated the transfer of capital and personnel from agriculture into business and professional investments. Everywhere in the Southwest it provided a base of political strength that enabled Mexican Americans to play political roles except where the forces of discrimination were too strong, as in many parts of Texas, or where Anglo-American immigration swamped the Mexican Americans, as in California. Although the forces of urbanization and acculturation have weakened it severely, it still survives along with other family systems among the Mexican Americans. Indeed, it shows a hardy ability to survive, to adjust, and to

persist. Even where it has almost vanished, its values still pervade Mexican-American family systems.

Some Hypotheses to be Tested..... I would like to present the following hypotheses for your consideration and suggest that research to support or disprove them is vital to an understanding of the history of the Mexican-American family systems. They are as follows: (1) Several variant forms of the extended bilateral patriarchal family system have existed among the Mexican Americans in the Southwest during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (2) The extended patriarchal family system survived in New Mexico and in other parts of the Southwest until comparatively recently and may still be found. (3) Although the extended family system weakened under the impact of urbanization, acculturation, and assimilation, its values still infuse current Mexican-American family systems. (4) As new family systems developed, they still preserved many characteristics and values of the extended bilateral patriarchal family system. (5) The growing social diversification among Mexican Americans since World War II has created many diverse family systems among the Mexican Americans. (6) There are significant geographical, regional, rural-urban, and social class differences among current Mexican-American family systems.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Castillo, R. Griswold
1975 "La Familia Chicana: Social Changes in the Chicano Family of Los Angeles: 1850-1880." Journal of Ethnic Studies, No. 3 (Spring), 41-58.

Knowlton, Clark S.
1961 "The Spanish Americans in New Mexico." Sociology and Social Research, No. 45 (July), 448-454.

1965 "Changes in the Structure and Roles of Spanish-American Families of Northern New Mexico." Proceedings of the Southwestern Social Science Association, No. 15 (April), 38-48.

1975 "The Neglected Chapters in Mexican-American History." Found in Mexican Americans Tomorrow, ed. by Gus Tyler, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Meinig, Donald W.
1969 Imperial Texas: An Interpretative Essay in Cultural Geography. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Miller, Michael V.
1975 "Variations in Mexican-American Family Life: A Review Synthesis." Unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, San Francisco, California (August).

Murillo, Nathan
1971 "The Mexican-American Family." Chicanos: Social and Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Wagner and Haug. St. Louis: Mosby.

Penalosa, Fernando
1968 "Mexican Family Roles." Journal of Marriage and the Family, No. 30 (November), 680-688.

Swadesh, Frances L.
1974 Los Primeros Polladores. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.